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Security Council

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Thursday, 27 April 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wang Guangya	(China)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mrs. Telalian
	Japan	Mr. Haneda
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

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06-32973 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire in which he requests that his delegation be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Charles Konan Banny, Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire. I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the Prime Minister to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Charles Konan Banny, Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I now give the floor to Mr. Charles Konan Banny, Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Konan Banny (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to express my thanks for this opportunity to address the Security Council this morning, in my capacity as Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, at an important stage of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. I would like to congratulate China on the work accomplished during its term as President of the Security Council.

I also wish to convey to the Council the greetings and gratitude of the people of Côte d'Ivoire, of its head of State, His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, and of the Transition Government, which I have the great honour to lead, for the interest that the Council has unfailingly showed regarding Côte d'Ivoire since the crisis erupted on 19 September 2002. It is a particular pleasure to express my gratitude to the Council for its constant support to my Government and to myself since we assumed our duties in December 2005. In this respect I welcome the warm reception and the attention the Council kindly gave my Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit on 29 March 2006.

This morning's meeting gives me the pleasant opportunity to express the sincere thanks and gratitude of the Ivorian people to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for everything he is doing to help Côte d'Ivoire to regain peace and stability.

The Council is more familiar than anyone else with the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and particularly with the peace and reconciliation process undertaken since the signing of the agreements of Linas-Marcoussis, Accra and Pretoria before the adoption, on 21 October 2005, of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005).

Prior to that date, the process was in difficulty. Moreover, resolution 1633 (2005) had to be adopted, at the end of the term of office of the President of the Republic, in order to continue the peace process that was under way, but there had not been sufficient progress to permit the holding of elections on 31 October. The various Ivorian protagonists had not managed to undertake any significant actions in terms of respecting the deadlines set by the agreements. The lack of confidence was clear in political circles, especially among the main Ivorian political leaders, most of whom were out of the country. Some were even afraid to be in Abidjan. The security situation was at its lowest level, and the Government of National Reconciliation was not functioning at its best.

It is in that context that the Security Council adopted — at the proposal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union — resolution 1633 (2005). Since that resolution was adopted, and the hopes it raised, Côte d'Ivoire, under the impetus of the Transition Government, is learning to live in a new era. This new context has allowed the peace and reconciliation process to evolve significantly. Even if events are not proceeding as quickly as we — I myself, the majority of observers and the vast majority of Ivorians — would wish, we can nevertheless say that the general situation now is relatively satisfactory.

Several organizations, African statesmen and statesmen from other countries have given their

support to the Ivorian political leaders and the people of Côte d'Ivoire in order to permit the peace process to make tangible progress. In that respect I wish to express the gratitude of Côte d'Ivoire to ECOWAS and to its Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Tandja Mamadou, to the African Union and its Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, not forgetting the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, and the African Union Mediator, His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki, and also the other heads of State for the positive role they have been playing.

Of course, I wish to stress once again the leading role played by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and by his team based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Of course I include the French forces participating in Operation Licorne.

Thanks to the efforts of all, and to those of what I call "the tandem", which I have decided to form with the head of State, Laurent Gbagbo, my Government has taken several initiatives towards reconciliation and the restoration of confidence. These include in particular the two meetings in Yamoussoukro, about which members have heard. The first was the governmental seminar on the road map, held from 9 to 11 February 2006. Military dialogue was resumed, and examinations were organized in the central, western and northern occupied regions. The university in Bouaké was opened. There was a meeting on 25 February 2006 among the four main Ivorian political leaders: Laurent Gbagbo, Henri Konan Bédié, Alassane Ouattara and Guillaume Soro.

That latter meeting — held in Côte d'Ivoire for the first time since the crisis began — made it possible for the participants to tackle, in my presence, the main questions of concern to them and whose resolution should give fresh impetus to the peace process. They first gave their views on key issues and took decisions that lead to restoration of confidence among themselves and within political circles. Thanks to that, hope emerged among the Ivorian people, which in turn led to significant progress in political, military, administrative and economic areas. In the political area, restoration of dialogue among the political leaders made it possible to bring down the great wall of distrust that was separating them and to remove obstacles to the implementation of the agreements signed and to open up the way to the implementation of measures set out in resolution 1633 (2005) and the International Working Group road map.

In the military area, and in accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the political leaders, the former belligerents, encouraged by the climate of political détente, have themselves resumed the exchanges that had been interrupted for more than a year, with a view to implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. This military-staff-level contact was well established when, on 12 April 2006, we lost momentum. However, that was not a definitive breakdown, because everything is moving towards an early resumption of the talks.

At the administrative level, the new spirit that emerged from the Yamoussoukro summit has made it possible to begin the process of redeploying State administration in the national education and higher education sectors in the regions controlled by the Forces nouvelles. Thus, it was possible for the first time in three years to hold school examinations under satisfactory conditions in all the regions controlled by the Forces nouvelles. The university in Bouaké, a stronghold of the Forces nouvelles, reopened its doors on 28 March 2006.

The forced halt to education in those regions greatly increased the desire of students — that is, children — to learn. And it was with intense emotion that, during my first trip to Bouaké, at the beginning of February, I read the messages written on the signs carried by the children — messages addressed to us adults: "We want to go to school"; "We want examinations". That was the first time I had heard that children like examinations. Now that has been accomplished and, together with the United Nations specialized agencies that called for a resumption of classes, I welcome this. My gratitude goes to those agencies.

At the economic level, the calming of the political environment has given new hope to economic leaders, whom I invited on 31 March 2006 to a forum at which all problems related to their activities and the conditions under which they are carried out were frankly discussed. A true convergence of views emerged at the end of our discussions. At the meetings, all the partners in that sector emphasized, inter alia, the security environment, for which the authority of the State has primary responsibility. As Council members know, the weakening of the State's authority following the war is making it extremely difficult to carry out that task.

The progress that I have just cited should, in my view, be made irreversible. We must enhance the climate of confidence that is gradually returning. The peace and reconciliation process is now at a crossroads. For me and for the international community — which Council members represent — that means that the process of emerging from the crisis is moving, slowly but surely, in the right direction. Indeed, recent Council statements attest to that.

While we should all welcome the generally positive developments in the peace process — at which we are pleased — we must recognize that some resistance still exists, which prevents us from making swifter progress in accordance with the timetable established by the International Working Group road map. Unfortunately, this is at a time when the Government is working with resolve to resolve the basic problems resulting from the crisis. Their resolution should enable us to create ideal conditions for the holding of open, fair, democratic and transparent elections in October 2006. In that connection, I should like to welcome the arrival in Côte d'Ivoire on 19 April 2006 of Mr. Gerard Stoudmann, new United Nations High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, and to assure him of my Government's full and complete cooperation.

At this stage of the process, when important decisions must be taken, I wish to call for vigilance and a redoubling of efforts on the part of everyone to resolve remaining problems. In that respect, I welcome the contents of the Secretary-General's eighth report on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2006/222), particularly its paragraph 74, in which the Secretary-General expresses his concern at the delays in the process and at the consequences to which new deadlocks could lead if the deadlines set by resolution 1633 (2005) are not respected.

It is necessary to help consolidate the political progress made by the Ivorian Government and achieve a true pact of cohesion and political stability, which is the cement for any process aimed at emerging from the crisis. I believe that the time has come to transform isolated efforts into collective action by the international community. That is why my Government shares the Secretary-General's desire to see a further strengthening of UNOCI's human, material and financial capabilities to ensure that the entire process of emerging from the crisis is secure until it is completed.

As members know, the various elements of that process — such as the DDR programme, the security of the electoral operations and the people's safety during the elections — require a safe atmosphere of confidence, which can be ensured only by a military presence that is more significant but also acts as a deterrent. Moreover, the importance of the October 2006 elections for Côte d'Ivoire and for the international community argues in favour of the implementation of measures that can make it possible for everything to be done in transparency and justice so as to avoid the slightest inclination to contest the outcome of the elections.

With specific regard to the strengthening of security throughout the Ivorian national territory, I should like to stress in particular that that is the main concern of all Ivorians and thus of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, we must guarantee security not only in Abidjan, but also in the interior, particularly in the western region and in Bouaké. The western region, as members know, borders the Republic of Liberia, whose people have many ethnic and cultural similarities to the people of western Côte d'Ivoire. I believe that ensuring good security in that part of Côte d'Ivoire would also ensure greater security in Liberia and would strengthen the nascent democratic process in that brotherly country.

If it occurred, any uncontrolled spillover that would destabilize western Côte d'Ivoire would inevitably have detrimental consequences in Liberia and even beyond, in Sierra Leone. In this respect, my Government welcomes the return of the Blue Helmets of UNOCI to this region of the country. My Government undertakes to assure them, and all the impartial forces, that they will have freedom of movement and freedom to work.

I know that a draft resolution on increasing the number of UNOCI troops is being prepared within the Council. While my Government welcomes this initiative, it would be desirable that the number of additional Blue Helmets being made available to UNOCI should be as close as possible to that requested by the Secretary-General. UNOCI would thus be able to give dynamic and effective support to the Government in the implementation of the International Working Group road map.

For all of these reasons, I would like to urge the members of the Council to support the Secretary-

General's proposal and to consider it very favourably. However, members should know that I remain convinced that without the firm political will of the main actors in the crisis and of all Ivorians to bring Côte d'Ivoire out of the current conflict, no military presence, and no international pressure, can resolve the crisis that the country is going through. But it is also true that, without the support of the international community, Ivorians will not be able, alone, to resolve all of the major problems of the Ivorian conflict.

Thus, let us all work together to restore peace in Côte d'Ivoire so that nothing and no one can make us turn back. It is in this spirit that I invite all of our international partners, and particularly those in the development sector, to respect their commitments in accordance with paragraph 3 of Chapter VIII of the annex to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement relating to economic recovery and the need for social cohesion. It stipulates in fact that the Linas-Marcoussis Round Table recommends to international institutions and international development partners that they provide support for the process of rebuilding Côte d'Ivoire.

I am extremely grateful for the welcome and the attention which Council members have kindly given me.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire for his statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to a private meeting to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.